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ABSTRACT

Growing concern over the high percentage of students leaving the Oregon public schools before graduation led to this study, which attempted to determine the activities and plans of early leavers and their reasons for leaving school. Telephone interviews were conducted with leavers in September 1980 in five geographic regions of the state. Limitations to the study include schools' differing definitions of early school leavers and uncertainty about the extent to which respondents were representative of the leavers who could not be reached. The report presents response data from the sample interviewed and makes the following recommendations for further research: (1) develop a more precise definition of early school leavers; (2) gather data from relevant groups not reached by this exploratory study; (3) follow up on this study's respondents; (4) use more restrictive sampling specifications; and (5) explore the relationship of a selected list of factors to the early school leaver problem. Appended are statewide net enrollment data from 1952 to 1980, a list of participating districts and schools, and the interview questions and coded responses. (WD)

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OREGON EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS STUDY

1980

Oregon Department of Education
700 Pringle Parkway SE
Salem, Oregon 97310

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State Superintendent of
Public Instruction

EA 013 875

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FOREWORD

One-third of our students leave public schools before graduation. While statistics describe how many students leave school and in what proportion, we need to know much more about this group before we can clarify future directions.

The Oregon Early School Leavers Study is a beginning: it provides at least tentative answers to questions of who, what and why. *Who* are the early school leavers? *What* have they been doing since they left school? *Why* did they leave?

The task before us now is to plan appropriately for the needs of these young people. To do this, we must both assess the data that has been collected and compare it with our own perceptions about dropouts. Readers are invited to make their own "perception check" by noting their thoughts regarding the questions of "who, what and why" prior to reading the study findings.

For further information, please contact Les Adkins, Director, Student Services, 378-5492, or toll free in Oregon 1-800-452-7813.

Verne A. Duncan
State Superintendent of
Public Instruction

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Penny S. McDonald, who was contracted by the Department of Education to conduct the Oregon Early School Leavers Study, deserves special commendation.

Many Oregonians contributed time and expertise to the study. Even more championed the importance of the research. Our thanks go to them.

To Oregon's 1979-80 early school leavers, a special thank you. Respondents were polite, cooperative, and open about sharing bits of their lives. Specific recognition also goes to the 54 Oregon secondary schools participating in the study. District superintendents, school principals, and staff indicated a high degree of interest in the research questions. Finally, the telephone interviewers must be commended for their attention to the individual human being. Often without realizing it, they communicated to those conducting the study the need to look deeply for the identification of problems and possible solutions, as early school leavers cannot be understood only through reference to tables of frequency and percentage.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Early School Leaver: Study Definition

"A student who in 1979-80, should have been, or was, enrolled in the ninth, tenth, eleventh or twelfth grade and during the academic year left your school and did not return."

Highlighted Findings

- Interviewers completed 529 interviews with students who left school during the 1979-80 school year, yielding a 32 percent response rate for the combined sample (a combination of initial contacts attempted, as well as replacement sample names). (Of the total number of interviews which could be completed, according to sampling specifications, 529 interviews represent 44 percent.)

- Of those responding, 52.8 percent were male, 46.4 female.

- One-third of those responding left school during the junior year.

- The activity most frequently mentioned by respondents was work: 68.9 percent had worked since leaving school, 45.6 percent were working when interviewed in September.

- In September, 67.4 percent did not indicate any of the education/training response categories as a present activity.

- However, also in the fall, 9.7 percent indicated that they were enrolled in high school credit/diploma programs; 12.9 percent were again enrolled in public secondary schools.

- When asked if they had future educational plans, 82.8 percent said that they did.

- The most frequently cited educational plans were:

  community college 40.0%

  GED 30.3%

  high school credit/diploma program 15.9%

  vocational school 13.6%

  public secondary school 11.7%

  college/university 10.2%

- Many factors were cited by respondents as leading to a decision to leave school; no single category exceeded 20 percent.

- The most frequently stated reasons for leaving school were:

  teachers 19.3%

  dislike of school in general 15.3%

  credits 13.6%

  dislike of specifically named school 13.1%

  boredom/lack of interest 11.7%

  desire for alternative educational program/institution 11.2%

  pregnancy (11.4 percent of females) 5.5%

- Just over 25 percent of respondents cited conduct or related matters as a reason for leaving school.

- When asked, "Do you think anything could have been done to help keep you in school?" 40.5 percent said "no," 33.5 "yes"; 25.9 were unsure.

- Respondents were asked to describe changes which might have helped keep them in school. The most frequently mentioned response categories were:

  school personnel 17.8%

  themselves 15.3%

  academics 14.6%

- The younger leavers (and/or those leaving at lower grades), when compared with older leavers (and/or those who left school at the upper grades),

gravitated in higher proportions toward options such as public secondary school, high school credit/diploma programs, public alternative school.

- The younger the age group, the higher was the percentage stating that they were doing "nothing."
- A second group, centering around those 19 years old when interviewed and seniors when they quit school, leaned toward vocational schools, apprenticeship programs, job corps, work, and the military in higher proportions than did the former group.
- The younger leavers stated dislike of school, nonattendance in class, and disciplinary action other than expulsion as reasons for leaving school in higher proportions than did the older leavers.
- In fact, the younger the leavers, the higher was the percentage mentioning "other disciplinary action."
- The upper age bracket indicated proportionately higher responses for classes, credits, "ease," and irrelevance as motivations for quitting school.
- Differences between the responses of males and females appear to center around stereotypical sex roles. Females had higher response rates for marriage, pregnancy, illness, doing nothing, or leaving to help with family financial problems. On the other hand, males exceeded females in the degree of involvement with all aspects of the work force.

Introduction

The Oregon Early School Leavers Study was undertaken as a response to growing concerns over the increasing number of young people who are leaving high school before graduation. The Department of Education's and State Board of Education's initiative to undertake the research project received added impetus from various individuals and groups, including the Oregon Legislature, and the Oregon Educational Coordinating Commission. The objectives of the study were (1) to determine what students who left school before graduation have been doing and planning, and (2) to determine the reasons for leaving school, according to students' own perceptions.

Background

Since 1952, the Department of Education has compiled statistics on public high school holding power. For each graduating class from 1952 to 1980, attendance records were used to determine percentage of retention from grade nine through graduation.

Over the last decade, the holding power of Oregon secondary schools has become a source of concern. In 1952, 63.8 percent of the expected number of students were awarded their high school diplomas. From that year until the mid-sixties, there was a gradual increase in retention to a high of 82.6 percent in 1965, 1967, and 1968. Beginning in 1969, however, holding power began to gradually decline over an eleven-year period. Only 67.9 percent of the original ninth-grade students graduated with their class of 1980. In other words, 32.1 percent of the anticipated class of 1980 graduates did not receive diplomas.

Research Methodology and Procedures

Telephone interviews with leavers were conducted during both day and early evening hours in the month of September. The interview schedule was built around the two basic research topics: the activities and plans of leavers, and their reasons for leaving school. Leavers were posed seven questions in an open-ended manner. For each question, leaver responses were then translated to response categories (developed from schedules of other studies, suggestions from professional organizations, and a field test conducted as part of this study). Thus, a respondent could give multiple answers for any single question.

Oregon Attitudes, a public opinion research firm, was contracted to supply the sample of secondary schools used in this study. Five geographic regions of the state (Tri-County, Willamette Valley, Southwest, North Coast, and East of the Cascades) were identified. Fifty-six junior and senior high schools were selected at random on a proportionate-to-student population basis in these five regions.

Each school was asked to supply a list of names and last-known telephone numbers of *all* of their 1979-80 early school leavers, grades nine through twelve. For the purposes of this study, the early school leaver was defined as "a student who in 1979-80, should have been, or was, enrolled in the ninth, tenth, eleventh, or twelfth grade and during the

academic year left your school and did not return." School personnel were told that students who were considered to have transferred to another school could be deleted from the list of early school leavers if an official transcript request had been made by the receiving school.

The total number of 1979-80 leavers identified by the participating schools, divided by their total enrollments (as of October 1978) yielded an 8 percent leaver rate. This coincides with the Oregon Department of Education calculation of a 32.1 percent nonretention rate for the class of 1980. The study's finding of an average 8 percent loss in one year over four classes is paralleled by translating class of 1980 losses to an 8 percent average yearly loss. Thus, the two methods of ascertaining nonretention provide concomitant results: 32 percent total loss in four years.

Oregon Attitudes designated the number of early school leavers to be sampled from each school so that a total sample size of approximately 1,400 could be obtained. In the case of a school submitting fewer names than the designated number, little could be done; however, when the identified number of ex-students exceeded the designated number the list was systematically sampled (entered randomly and every kth selected) to yield the designated number of names.

When the telephone interviewers came to the point where repeated attempts to obtain interviews were producing few results, it was determined that lists with additional available names should be re-sampled. School leavers who could not be reached for various reasons, such as unknown or disconnected telephone numbers, were deleted from the sample and other young people were selected to replace them by a systematic sampling of the remaining names of school leavers at the same school.

Limitations of the Study

The Oregon Early School Leavers Study could be described as a study in limitations. Any social phenomenon as complex as public school dropout offers tremendous challenges to the researcher—particularly in study design. Of the complex of factors potentially contributing to the decision to leave school, which will be focused upon in the study? From whom should information be gathered? What is the best way to define and identify this population? How can a defensible response rate be attained?

Because the Oregon Early School Leavers Study represented the first attempt to describe Oregon's growing school dropout population, it was necessary to determine exploratory research priorities. Two research questions were chosen: What do early school leavers do? Why do they leave school before graduation? These questions were posed to ex-students, specifically those having left Oregon secondary schools in the academic year 1979-80. As a result, tentative answers to two questions are available, from the recent leavers' viewpoints. It is quite possible that other questions, equally as important, should be posed in the future, and that they should be asked of other populations—in the schools, in social service agencies, in business and labor, and in the communities. In addition, the young people in this sample might respond quite differently to the same questions if asked six months from now, three years from now.

A second limitation of this study centers around sample selection. Two of the 56 schools agreeing to participate in the study did not send lists of school leavers, diminishing our intended sample size by 57 names. In addition, as mentioned previously, some schools identified fewer students than the Oregon Attitudes' designated number for that site. To illustrate, the sampling specifications might have assumed 31 names could be derived from X high school, but X high school, in reality, had only 25 early school leavers in 1979-80.

It is also possible that schools generally under-identified school leavers. For example, the study definition describes a school leaver as a student who should have been, or was, in one of grades nine through twelve and then left school; yet, it might be extremely difficult to be precise about those students who *should have been* in those grades, given the degree of family mobility alone. Furthermore, the study definition of a school leaver is quite a broad one, whereas school officials over time may develop personal, somewhat more restrictive, definitions of the dropout. Finally, the task of actually compiling the study lists was often delegated. Certainly the original definition could have been reinterpreted in that delegation process.

Inherent to nearly any research study is the concern that somehow the responding group differs from the part of the selected sample that could not be reached and that, as a result, findings will be biased. That concern is a justifiable one in this study. A small number of

young people refused to respond; or in some cases, parents refused access to their children. Many leavers could not be contacted because their whereabouts were unknown, phones were disconnected, or families had moved and their telephone numbers had been reassigned. The difficulties encountered in reaching the selected sample were varied and numerous; consequently, many young people were never interviewed. The extent to which those not reached parallel or differ from the 529 respondents reported in this study is simply not known.

Recommendations for Further Research

All of the following recommendations for future research of Oregon early school leavers assume the most basic recommendation—more comprehensive studies over time:

1. Develop a more precise definition of the early school leaver, one that would include young people not readily identifiable by the schools (e.g., teenagers who, unknown to the local district, move into a school community; or those known to social agencies or the court system but perhaps not to the educational institutions).

2. Gather data from relevant groups not reached by this exploratory study (e.g., 1980 sample members never contacted; future leavers, including those below grade nine; teachers, counselors, school administrators; parents of leavers).

3. Follow-up on this study's respondents, with particular emphasis on the degree to which their future activities are congruent with stated plans.

4. Use more restrictive sampling specifications so that respondents can be compared on the basis of additional variables such as socioeconomic status of community, ethnicity, school size.

5. Explore the relationship of the following factors to the early school leaver problem:

   - self-concept
   - scholastic ability
   - achievement in basic skills
   - grades
   - attendance
   - disciplinary record
   - involvement with co-curricular activities
   - peer and family attitudes toward education
   - family structure/socioeconomic status
   - drugs/alcohol
   - delinquency/crime
   - knowledge of alternative programs
   - months in which students leave most frequently
   - nature of employment of working leavers
   - economic, political, social trends

OREGON EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS REPORT: 1980

INTRODUCTION

The Oregon Early School Leavers Study was undertaken as a response to growing concerns over the increasing number of young people who leave high school before graduation. The Department of Education's and State Board of Education's initiative to undertake the research project received added impetus from various individuals and groups, including the Oregon Legislature and the Oregon Educational Coordinating Commission. The objectives of the study were (1) to determine the activities and plans of students who left school before their graduation, and (2) to determine the reasons for leaving school according to students' own perceptions.

BACKGROUND

Since 1952, the Oregon Department of Education has compiled statistics on public high school holding power. For each graduating class from 1952 to 1979, attendance records were used to determine the percentage of enrollment retention from grade nine through graduation. All percentages were based on total numbers, not individual students. To illustrate: with the class of 1952, 18,918 students entered the ninth grade in Oregon public secondary schools in 1948-49. One year later, enrollment in the tenth grade was 17,457--or 92.3 percent of the original 18,918. The following year, the eleventh grade enrollment was at 82.9 percent of the original figure; senior year, it was 70.5 percent. Compared with the original 18,918 freshmen entering in 1948, 63.8 percent actually graduated as the class of 1952. Thus, the overall holding power of the class of 1952 from ninth grade through graduation totaled 63.8 percent.

Over the past decade, the holding power of Oregon secondary schools has become a source of concern. As described above, 63.8 percent of those entering in 1948 were awarded diplomas in 1952. From 1952 until the mid-sixties, there was a gradual increase in retention rates to a high of 82.6 percent in 1965, 1967, and 1968. However, by 1969 holding power began to gradually decrease, a trend that has continued for the past eleven years. The latest statistical information available indicates that only 67.9 percent of students entering as freshman in 1976 graduated with the class of 1980. In other words, 32.1 percent of the anticipated class of 1980 graduates did not receive diplomas.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

In order to develop an appropriate research design, it was necessary to:

1. Develop an overall research plan that would be feasible given time, personnel, and financial constraints.

2. Design an instrument that would allow students a full range of responses to major research questions, yet minimize confusion for interviewers and assure reliability.

3. Sample the early school leaver population in such a way that the entire state's early school leaver population could be described.*

The procedures employed in instrumentation, sampling, interviewing are described below, followed by major limitations of the study.

Instrumentation

Telephone interviews were selected as the means to gather data for several reasons: it is cost-effective, and previous research on this somewhat elusive population has indicated that both scheduled face-to-face interviews and mailed questionnaires yield quite low response rates.

The telephone interview schedule addressed the two basic questions: What do young people who leave school before high school graduation do? Why do they decide to leave school? These two questions were broken down so as to elicit more specific information: past, present, and future activities; reasons for leaving school as well as ideas about changes which might have led to a decision to stay in school through graduation.

Questions were designed so that respondents could answer in an open-ended manner; thus, it was necessary to format the instrument to allow for voluntary (rather than "forced choice") multiple responses to each question. This brought the accompanying challenge of assuring both ease and uniformity in response recording and coding.

In order to provide for as many potential responses as possible on the interview schedule, several sources of information were employed. Initially, possible responses were built from common sense speculation regarding what school leavers might be doing and why they might have chosen to leave the public secondary schools. The questionnaires of similar studies were analyzed for additional response categories. Further, Oregon Department of Education personnel and representatives of Oregon professional organizations (for administrators, counselors, and teachers) were encouraged to critique a draft of the interview schedule. Finally, a field test of the proposed instrument resulted in two major modifications: the expansion of response categories due to the wide variety of responses given; the organization of some extremely varied response categories under subheadings.

Sampling

Oregon Attitudes, a public opinion research firm, was contracted to supply a sample of secondary schools for this study. Fifty-six junior and senior high

*A description of Oregon's recent dropouts was the major study purpose. As a result, a review of background literature on dropouts was not a study focus. However, selected studies were reviewed for methodological approaches to the study of dropouts. Further, a paper synthesizing the rather inconclusive literature on dropouts is being prepared for future consideration.

schools were selected at random on a proportionate-to-student population basis in five geographic regions of the state:*

1. Tri-County (Multnomah, Washington, Clackamas counties)
2. Willamette Valley (Marion, Polk, Yamhill, Linn, Lane, Benton counties)
3. Southwest (Douglas, Josephine, Coos, Curry, Jackson counties)
4. North Coast (Lincoln, Tillamook, Clatsop, Columbia counties)
5. East of the Cascades (all other counties)

The superintendent and the principal of each selected district and school were contacted by telephone; the study purposes were explained and study participation was requested. A few selected districts and schools declined to participate; in these instances, the researcher contacted school personnel of schools identified by Oregon Attitudes as replacement schools for the geographical area affected.

A follow-up letter then was mailed to principals and superintendents of all participating schools and districts. Each school was asked to supply a list of names and last-known telephone numbers of all of their 1979-80 early school leavers, grades nine through twelve. For the purposes of this study, the early school leaver was defined as "a student who in 1979-80, should have been, or was, enrolled in the ninth, tenth, eleventh, or twelfth grade and during the academic year left your school and did not return." School personnel were told that students who were considered to have transferred to other schools could be deleted from the list of early school leavers if official transcript requests had been made by the receiving schools.

The total number of 1979-80 leavers identified by the participating schools, divided by their total year's enrollments (as of October 1978) yielded an 8 percent leaver rate. This coincides with the Oregon Department of Education calculation of a 32.1 percent nonretention rate for the class of 1980. The study rate of an average 8 percent loss in one year over four classes is paralleled by translating class of 1980 losses to an 8 percent average yearly loss. Thus, the two methods of ascertaining nonretention provide concomitant results: an approximation of 32 percent total loss in four years.

Oregon Attitudes designated a number of early school leavers to be sampled from each school so that a total sample size of approximately 1,400 could be obtained. In the case of a school submitting fewer names than the designated number, little could be done; however, when the identified number of ex-students exceeded the designated number, the list was systematically sampled (entered randomly and every kth name selected) to yield the designated number of names.

When the telephone interviewers came to the point where repeated attempts to obtain more interviews were producing very few results, it was determined that lists with additional available names should be resampled. School

*Two of these ultimately did not participate.

leavers who could not be reached for various reasons, such as unknown or disconnected telephone numbers, were deleted from the sample and others were selected as replacements by means of a systematic sampling of the remaining names of school leavers at the same school.

Interviewing

Telephone interviewers worked throughout the month of September, during both day and early evening hours. Each telephone contact was initiated by an introduction of the interviewer, an explanation of the study, and a request for permission to ask some questions. After each attempted or completed call, notations were made on telephone lists employing the following codes:

Symbol	Explanation
✓	Interview completed
R	Interview refused
CB @ _____ (time) am/pm _____ (date)	Call back at (time) on (date)
→ _____ (phone #), _____ (state)	Can be reached at (telephone #) in (state)
*OR ___	*OR--"Outside Range," Outside present telephone range (i.e., Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, No. California)
NA @ _____ (time) am/pm _____ (date)	No answer at (time) on (date)
B @ _____ (time) am/pm _____ (date)	Busy at (time) on (date)
*Disc.	Disconnected telephone
*DE: _____ (specific reason)	Dead end: (with explanation)

The most consistent emphasis in the interviewer training sessions and in the daily meetings of interviewers was uniformity in questioning respondents and in the coding of responses. Interviewers were asked to avoid probing or follow-up questions. If a response was ambiguous, the interviewer was to simply pose the original question again or to read to the respondent the closest response category to see if the response had been interpreted correctly. Interviewers were also asked to take verbatim notes so that complex

(*The three designations which were used to determine names that should be deleted and substituted by resampling when possible.)

or confusing answers could be thoughtfully coded after the interview was completed, rather than under pressure during the interview. These verbatim notes were also analyzed for significant comments which would add detail and specificity to the coded response categories and which could be reported along with quantitative data.

Limitations of the Study

The Oregon Early School Leavers Study could be described as a study in limitations. Any social phenomenon as complex as public school dropout offers tremendous challenges to the researcher--particularly in study design. Of the complex of factors potentially contributing to the decision to leave school, which will be focused upon in the study? From whom should information be gathered? What is the best way to define and identify this population? How can a defensible response rate be attained?

Because this study represents the first attempt to describe Oregon's increasing school dropout population, it was necessary to determine exploratory research priorities. Two research questions were chosen: What do early school leavers do? Why do they leave school before graduation? These two questions were posed in various forms to ex-students, specifically those having left Oregon secondary schools during the academic year 1979-80. As a result, tentative answers to two questions are available, from the recent leavers' viewpoints. It is quite possible that other questions, equally as important, should be posed in the future, and that they should be asked of other populations--school and social service agency personnel, business and labor representatives, and community members. In addition, the young people in the sample might respond quite differently if asked the same questions six months from now, in three years.

A second limitation of this study centers around sample selection. Two of the 56 schools agreeing to participate in the study did not send lists of school leavers, diminishing the intended sample size by 57 names. In addition, as mentioned previously, some schools identified fewer students than the Oregon Attitudes designated number for that site. To illustrate, the sampling specifications might have assumed 31 names could be derived from X High School, but X High School, in reality, had only 25 early school leavers in 1979-80.

It is also possible that schools under-identified school leavers. For example, the study definition describes a school leaver as a student who should have been, or was, in one of grades nine through twelve and then left school; yet, it might be extremely difficult to be precise about those students who should have been in those grades, given the degree of family mobility alone. Furthermore, the study definition of a school leaver is quite broad, whereas school officials over time may develop personal, somewhat more restrictive, definitions of the dropout. Finally, the task of actually compiling the study lists was often delegated. Certainly the original definition could have been reinterpreted in that delegation process.

Inherent to nearly any research study is the concern that somehow the responding group differs from the part of the selected sample that could not be reached and that, as a result, findings will be biased. That concern is

also justifiable in this study. A small number of young people refused to respond; or, in some cases, parents refused access to their children. Many leavers could not be contacted--because their whereabouts were unknown, phones were disconnected, or families had moved and their telephone numbers had been reassigned. The difficulties encountered in reaching the selected sample were varied and numerous. Therefore, many young people were simply never interviewed. The extent to which those not reached parallel or differ from the 529 respondents reported in this study is not known.

RESULTS

The results of the 1980 Oregon Early School Leavers Study are presented in this section, organized according to the following topics:

A. Study return rates

B. Description of the responding sample

C. The activities of early school leavers

D. The reasons for leaving school

E. The relationship of class, age and sex to leaver responses

F. Comments of early school leavers

A. Study Return Rates

Earlier in this report, the selected sample was described as elusive. The following table accounts for all attempted and completed contacts and specifies the range of difficulties encountered in reaching the leavers.

Table 1

	Original Sample	Replacement Sample	Combined Sample
Completed Interviews	415	114	529
Interview Refusals	24	11	35
No Answer	37	45	82
Call Back	40	30	70
Telephone Disconnections	159	74	233
Misc. "Dead Ends"*	497	195	692
Outside Telephone Range			
Oregon	19	4	23
Outside Oregon	13	0	13
TOTAL	1,204	473	1,677

*Miscellaneous "Dead Ends"	
Telephone Number Unknown (no number, unpublished number, refusal to give new number, phone out of order, new number unknown [moved], number reassigned to another party, whereabouts unknown)	608
Military	30
Misidentification as leaver (never left school, transferred to another school)	26
Institutions (hospital, custody, MacLaren, jail)	10
Travel	9
Translation Needed (Note: Leavers speaking a language; e.g., Spanish, or dialect for which translation could be obtained were interviewed in their native language.)	8
Death	1
	692

Because it became necessary to resample lists to obtain names to replace those that could not be contacted, reporting a single return rate figure would be inappropriate. Therefore, percentages for each of the three samples (original, replacement, and combined) have been displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

	Original Sample (44% return rate)	Replacement Sample	Combined Sample (32% return rate)
Percent Contacted	36%	26%	34%
Percent of Contacts Responding	95%	91%	94%
Percent Impossible to Contact	61%	74%	66%

In addition, two general return rate figures can be determined: the 529 completed interviews represent 44 percent of the original sample and 32 percent of the combined sample. The 44 percent rate indicates the proportion of completed interviews to the total number of leavers interviewers could contact within the sampling specifications. The more conservative 32 percent indicates the proportion of completed interviews to the total number of leavers interviewers attempted to reach, counting both original sample and replacement names.

B. Description of the Responding Sample

The population selected for this study was early school leavers from 1979-80. The sample was stratified by geographical region only. Further, many selected sample members could not be reached. Therefore, the succeeding personal data information cannot be generalized to a description of all of Oregon's early leavers. Instead, the data should be viewed as descriptive of the responding sample--529 interviewees. This specific group is described below as to school geographical region, level of school, school size, sex, age when interviewed, class when left school, and ethnic origin.

Respondents by Geographical Region of Previous Public School

Tri-County	44.7%
Willamette Valley	24.1%
North Coast	4.0%
Southwest	16.1%
East of Cascades	11.2%

Respondents by Level of Previous Public School

Junior High	2.8%
Senior High	96.6%

Respondents by Size of Previous Public School

0-200	.4%
201-600	11.6%
601+	87.7%

Respondents by Sex

Male	52.8%
Female	46.4%

Respondents by Age When Interviewed

13	0%
14	1.3%
15	7.8%
16	24.4%
17	31.3%
18	27.7%
19	6.6%

Respondents by Class When Left School

9	15.3%
10	26.9%
11	33.1%
12	23.3%

Respondents by Ethnic Origin

White	92.8%
Black	.6%
Hispanic	0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	.2%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	2.3%
Other	1.9%
Information Withheld	1.2%

C. The Activities of Early School Leavers

Three questions were posed, allowing for the past, present, and future perspective of each leaver. In this section, each question is presented precisely as worded in the interview; responses to each are reported and analyzed.

Question 1

Could you please tell me what you have been doing since you left school?

1.	High school credit/diploma program	5.7%
2.	GED program	8.0%
3.	Evening public secondary school	1.7%
4.	Public alternative school	1.1%
5.	Private or parochial secondary school	.4%
6.	Correspondence courses	0%
7.	Job corps	1.1%
8.	Vocational school	.4%
9.	Apprenticeship program	0%
10.	Community college	11.0%
11.	College/university	.8%
12.	Military	1.7%
13.	National Guard	.2%
14.	Work	68.9%
15.	Layoff	.8%
16.	Job-seeking	6.4%
17.	Housewife	2.8%
18.	Travel	4.4%
19.	Institutional care	.6%
20.	Nothing	10.2%
21.	Other	11.2%
		137.4%

By study definition, respondents had left school at any time during the 1979-80 school year; interviews were conducted during September 1980. Thus, activities enumerated above could have taken place over a four- to thirteen-month period.

The fact that respondents had just completed summer activities might account for the one very frequent response: 68.9 percent of the sample said they had been working.

There is clearly a sharp drop in frequency from the numbers of leavers who were working to other options, although four other response categories yield frequencies approximating the 10 percent level. For example, 10.2 percent said that they were doing "nothing"; on the other hand, 11 percent mentioned attendance at a community college and 8 percent stated they had been working toward GED certificates. It should be noted that respondents were allowed multiple responses to every question; therefore, the 11 percent figure of those enrolled at a community college and the 8 percent GED figure could reflect the same respondents--individuals working toward GEDs through the community colleges. Finally, 11.2 percent of the leavers mentioned an activity that was categorized as "other." When frequency tallies were used to delineate these miscellaneous responses, a strong trend was evident: some thirty-one of the respondents in this category (53%) were married or planning to marry, or were pregnant or had given birth.

The percentages for Question 1 address what leavers had been doing; however, equally important is the data showing what they had not been doing. For example, given the high degree of involvement in the labor market, it is notable that very few students are in vocational schools and none are enrolled in apprenticeship programs--two clear avenues to increased job skills and earning power.

In fact, when the first 12 response categories, all of which clearly involve some form of education or training, were analyzed separately, results accentuate the fact that leavers had not necessarily gravitated toward formal options which would build academic or work skills. Leavers who mentioned none of the first 12 education/training alternatives accounted for 79.5 percent of the sample. However, 10.2 percent had chosen one of the twelve options; 9.1 percent had chosen two; 1.1 percent had taken advantage of three possible routes to further education and/or job training.

Question 2

And what are you doing right now?

1.	High school credit/diploma program	9.7%
2.	GED program	5.5%
3.	Public secondary school	12.9%
4.	Evening public secondary school	.4%
5.	Public alternative school	.9%
6.	Private or parochial secondary school	.2%
7.	Correspondence courses	0%
8.	Job corps	.4%
9.	Vocational school	1.7%
10.	Apprenticeship program	0%
11.	Community college	9.3%
12.	College/university	.6%
13.	Military	1.5%
14.	National Guard	0%
15.	Work	45.6%

16.	Layoff	2.3%
17.	Job seeking	11.4%
18.	Housewife	3.0%
19.	Travel	.2%
20.	Institutional Care	.2%
21.	Nothing	8.7%
22.	Other	10.8%
		125.3%

The percentages for many response categories are strikingly consistent from Question 1 to Question 2. Many of the changes in frequencies, both increases and decreases, are likely accounted for by the change in time frame employed in the two questions. In Question 2, the present, that is September, was emphasized; the summer was over for many of them.

As a result, it seems reasonable that travel would decrease (from 4.4% to .2%); that job seeking (from 6.4% to 11.4%) and layoff (from .8% to 2.3%) would increase and work decrease (from 68.9% to 45.6%) as summer employment ended.

The separate analysis of education/training possibilities (in this case items 1-13, as public secondary school was an additional fall option) indicated a move to increased utilization of educational alternatives. Though the proportion of respondents taking advantage of two or three options remained fairly constant from the first to the second question, the percentage not mentioning any of these options had decreased (from 79.5% to 67.4%). Further, the percentage exercising at least one option for further education or training more than doubled (from 10.2% to 22.3%).

It is interesting to note specifically where this movement back to education took place. Vocational school enrollment accelerated slightly (from .4% to 1.7%). The major advancements in enrollment, however, took place in the high school credit diploma programs (from 5.7% to 9.7%) and in the public secondary schools, which in the fall readmitted 12.9 percent of the study sample.

It is quite possible that what appear to be decreases in GED program participation (down from 8% to 5.5%) and community college attendance (down from 11% to 9.3%) would not have held true had interviews been conducted later, when the new community college academic year began. In fact, frequency tallies of the "other" category indicated that, in addition to the repeated pregnancy or raising a child phenomenon, some leavers were simply "waiting"--for school, community college, college, a specific program to begin for the year.

Question 3

Do you have plans to continue your education in the future?

(If answer is yes or unsure) What type of schooling are you thinking about?

Question 3 was divided into two parts. If a respondent answered "yes" or "unsure" to the first question, then the second, more specific question was asked also. Only 5.1 percent responded to the first question with a "no" (with

82.8%, "yes"; 12.1% "unsure"). Therefore, nearly the entire sample was asked both questions. The response frequencies to the follow-up question--"What type of schooling are you thinking about?"--are presented below, with frequencies indicating the proportion of the entire sample naming each schooling category.

1.	High school credit/diploma program	15.9%
2.	GED program	30.3%
3.	Public secondary school	11.7%
4.	Evening public secondary school	3.2%
5.	Public alternative school	.9%
6.	Private or parochial secondary school	.2%
7.	Correspondence courses	0%
8.	Job corps	1.1%
9.	Vocational school	13.6%
10.	Apprenticeship program	.9%
11.	Community college	40.0%
12.	College/university	10.2%
13.	Military	4.0%
14.	Other	7.2%
15.	Unsure	7.8%
		147.0%

The responding sample cannot be viewed as a group without educational aspirations. Of the 1979-80 leavers sampled, 40 percent were considering community college;* 30.3 percent, the GED program;* 15.9 percent, a high school credit/diploma program; 13.6 percent, vocational school; 11.7 percent, public secondary school; and 10.2 percent, a college or university. Furthermore, the data indicate that some leavers anticipate using more than one of these educational opportunities, as the total percentage far exceeds 100 percent. Only 7.8 percent of the sample were unable to be specific about future educational plans.

Some options--such as correspondence courses, private schools, apprenticeship programs, alternative schools, Job Corps, and military service--received little attention from respondents. Questions need to be asked regarding these low response rates: Do young people know about these possibilities? Are they attractive choices to them? If so, are they accessible to the early school leaver?

Although the findings from this interview question are heartening, further confirmation is needed. For example, some schooling options remain simply considerations, with marked discrepancies between the numbers contemplating certain options and those actually pursuing them. Follow-up of these young people as they attempt to put their plans into action clearly is necessary.

*In fact, a separate analysis of these two categories indicates that 38.8 percent of the respondents mentioned either GED or community college; 15.7 percent stated they were considering the GED program at a community college.

D. The Reasons for Leaving School

Question 4

Could you explain why you decided to leave school?

1.	Unsure	5.3%
2.	Dislike of school in general	15.3%
3.	Dislike of specifically named school	13.1%

Academics

4.	Class(es) in general	6.8%
5.	Ease	1.5%
6.	Irrelevance to personal needs/desires	7.2%
7.	Difficulty	4.5%
8.	Incomplete classwork	5.1%
9.	Failing grades	4.5%
10.	Lack of accomplishment	2.7%
11.	Low level of learning	6.4%
12.	Schedule	1.9%
13.	Basic skills	.6%
14.	Credits	13.6%
15.	Competencies	.6%
16.	Other	2.3%

Conduct Standards

17.	School nonattendance	7.8%
18.	Class(es) nonattendance	8.0%
19.	Rules	3.8%
20.	Parent/child environment	2.8%
21.	Expulsion	3.6%
22.	Other disciplinary action	6.1%
23.	Other	2.1%

Interpersonal Relations

24.	Emphasis on social relations in school	2.1%
25.	Emphasis on social relations by students	3.8%
26.	Clique	6.6%
27.	Feeling of being out of place	4.7%
28.	Hassles	5.3%
29.	Other	3.2%

School Personnel

30.	Teacher(s)	19.3%
31.	Counselor(s)	3.4%
32.	Administrator(s)	7.4%
33.	Advice to leave school	5.1%
34.	Lack of encouragement to stay in school	2.8%
35.	Other	1.9%

Self

36.	General attitude to school	5.1%
37.	Boredom/lack of interest	11.7%
38.	Lack of motivation	1.5%
39.	Emotional/mental state	3.0%
40.	Physical illness	5.9%
41.	Financial need	5.9%
42.	Poor decision-making	2.1%
43.	Other	3.4%

Home/Family Concerns

44.	Lack of parent/guardian support to stay in school	2.7%
45.	Marriage	2.3%
46.	Pregnancy	5.5%
47.	Financial need	2.5%
48.	Other	4.5%

Alternative Work/Education Goals

49.	Work offer	.9%
50.	Desire to work	8.0%
51.	Desire for alternative learning mode	2.7%
52.	Desire for alternative educational program/institution	11.2%
53.	Other	.6%
54.	Other	3.4%
		274.1%

To properly interpret both Questions 4 (page 13) and 5 (page 16), it should be noted that respondents could offer as many responses as they wished. As a result, discrete percentages do not total to an even 100 percent. For example, from the responses for "expulsion" and "other disciplinary action" (3.6% and 6.1% respectively), it cannot be concluded that nearly 10 percent of the leavers left due to discipline problems, as a single respondent could have mentioned both categories.

Also, if leavers had been given a questionnaire and for each response category had been asked to indicate whether or not it was a factor leading to the decision to drop out, percentages in some categories might well have been inflated. In other words, the 8 percent leaving school because of a "desire to work" is the percentage of the sample voluntarily stating that as motivation to leave school; the other 92 percent simply did not allude to this motive although "desire to work" might still have played some part in their decision. This voluntary response aspect applies to all questions asked.

Perhaps the most dramatic finding in the study was that the reasons for leaving secondary school are varied and complex. As a result, in order to synthesize the wide array of possible responses, separate analyses of individual subheadings, such as academics and self, were made. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Percent Mentioning One, Two, three, Four or None of the Response Categories

Subheading	One	Two	Three	Four	None
Academics	29.0%	10.8%	1.9%	.4%	58.0%
Conduct Standards	18.9%	5.7%	.8%	.4%	74.2%
Interpersonal Relations	12.7%	4.7%	.9%	.2%	81.4%
School Personnel	25.2%	4.7%	1.5%	.2%	68.4%
Self	31.1%	3.8%	--	--	65.2%
Home/Family Concerns	12.7%	2.1%	.2%	--	85.0%
Alternative Work/Education Goals	20.1%	1.3%	.2%	--	78.4%

Even when subheading responses are used to synthesize data, it is difficult to single out the reasons why these students left school before graduation. Leavers did not seem to be very uncertain about why they left (only 5.3% were coded as "unsure"), yet no single subheading was a motive for dropping out for even half of the sample. Possible interpretations are: (1) there is a complex interplay of factors leading to an increasing early school leaver rate, and (2) there are many individual reasons for the decision to leave a public secondary school. Further complicating the analysis of motivational factors is the knowledge that many leavers may not be aware of some of the more subtle factors that could have led to a dropout decision, such as the attitudes of their peers and family regarding the importance of a high school education.

Some common myths about dropouts, though, are challenged by this data. First, according to the leavers' perceptions at least, personal conduct or school conduct standards did not play a big part in deciding to leave school. Only slightly more than one-fourth (25.8%) mention anything in this area, and no single response category--from attendance to rules to expulsion--was referred to by even 10 percent of the sample. Thus, there were surely some who were in quite serious trouble, but 74.2 percent mentioned nothing in this area.

The stereotype of a dropout as one who simply feels incapable of achieving academically does not appear to be appropriate for this responding sample either. Only 4.5 percent mention grades and/or academic difficulty as a reason for leaving school; less than 1 percent referred to either competencies or basic skills deficiencies.

In reviewing all 54 response categories, no single category was identified by 20 percent of those sampled. In descending order of frequency, the seven factors that could be isolated as receiving a response from 10 percent or more of the respondents are as follows:

• Teachers	19.3%
• Dislike of school in general	15.3%
• Credits	13.6%
• Dislike of specifically named school	13.1%
• Boredom/lack of interest	11.7%
• Desire for alternative educational program/institution	11.2%
• Pregnancy (5.5% of the total sample equates to 11.4% of the females)	5.5%

Question 5

Do you think anything could have been done to help keep you in school?

(If answer is yes or unsure) What changes might have helped to keep you in school until graduation?

Again, this section of the interview was presented in two parts, the follow-up question being posed to those respondents who answered "yes" or "unsure" to the first question. Frequencies for both questions are calculated for all 529 cases.

Only one-third (33.5%) of the sample stated something could have been done to affect their decision to quit public secondary school. A quarter (25.9%) of the respondents were uncertain; 40.5 percent indicated that nothing could have been done to help keep them in school. The latter percentage is a curious one; it perhaps raises more questions than it answers. Do these respondents see the schools, and perhaps all the institutions affecting them, as so rigid that they are incapable of change? Or do they see themselves as unable or unwilling to change, even if modified systems were available to them? Are there alternatives of which they are unaware that could have made a difference?

The responses of the leavers who answered the second question were as follows:

Area for change

1.	School in general	2.3%
2.	Specifically named school	4.0%
3.	Academics	14.6%
4.	Conduct/conduct standards	7.8%
5.	Interpersonal relations	6.4%

6.	School personnel	17.8%
7.	Self	15.3%
8.	Home/family	3.2%
9.	Other	5.1%
10.	Unsure	7.0%
		86.5%

Once leavers, even if originally "unsure," were asked what changes might have helped keep them in school, most could volunteer some suggestions. The changes respondents most frequently indicated as potentially influencing their decision to stay in school fell into three areas: (1) school personnel (17.8%), (2) academics (14.6%), (3) self (15.3%).

Responses to this question, together with the results of Question 4, point to some tentative direction for policy and programs for early school leavers. However, even the highest percentages for categories of response to the two questions never exceed 20 percent. Therefore, respondents seem to be indicating that among themselves there are leavers who will not be reached by a single emphasis, such as modification in the academic programs.

E. The Relationship of Class, Age and Sex to Leaver Responses

Responses that showed relatively strong relationship with the variables of class when left school, age when interviewed, and sex, are reported in Tables 4, 5 and 6. The data presentation is followed by a synthesis and observations.

Table 4
Responses by Grade when Left School

Question	Response Category	% 9th Grade	% 10th Grade	% 11th Grade	% 12th Grade
Could you please tell me what you have been doing since you left school?	GED program	3.7	7.0	12.6	4.9
	Public alternative school	4.9	0	1.1	0
	Work	51.9	62.7	78.3	74.0
	Nothing	28.4	11.3	5.1	4.1
And what are you doing right now?	High school credit/diploma program	21.0	10.6	5.1	8.1
	Public secondary school	35.8	11.3	10.3	4.1
	Vocational school	2.5	0	.6	4.9

Question	Response Category	% 9th Grade	% 10th Grade	% 11th Grade	% 12th Grade
	Military	0	0	1.1	4.9
	Work	22.2	43.0	50.3	56.9
What type of schooling are you thinking about?	Public secondary school	29.6	12.0	6.3	8.1
	Apprenticeship program	0	0	.6	3.3
	Community college	28.4	35.9	44.0	47.2
	Military	4.9	5.6	.6	6.5
Could you explain why you decided to leave school?	Class(es)	0	6.3	10.3	6.5
	Credits	6.2	7.0	15.4	24.4
	Other disciplinary action	14.8	6.3	1.1	7.3
	Feeling of being out of place	9.9	5.6	4.0	1.6
	Counselors	4.9	2.1	1.1	7.3
	Administrators	6.2	12.7	5.1	5.7
	Other	8.6	2.1	2.3	3.3

Table 5
Responses by Age when Interviewed

Question	Response Category	% 14	% 15	% 16	% 17	% 18	% 19
Could you please tell me what you have been doing since you left school?	Public alternative school	0	7.3	.8	1.2	0	0
	Job Corps	0	0	1.6	1.2	0	2.9
	Military	0	0	0	.6	4.8	2.9

Question	Response Category	% 14	% 15	% 16	% 17	% 18	% 19
	National Guard	0	0	0	0	0	2.9
	Work	14.3	58.5	58.1	72.1	77.4	82.9
	Nothing	71.4	31.7	14.0	8.5	2.78	0
And what are you doing right now?	High school credit/diploma program	0	31.7	11.6	8.5	4.8	5.7
	Public secondary school	42.9	51.2	16.3	10.9	3.4	0
	Public alternative school	14.3	2.4	.8	1.2	0	0
	Military	0	0	0	.6	3.4	2.9
	Work	0	24.4	36.4	49.1	54.8	60.0
What type of schooling are you thinking about?	High school credit/diploma program	14.3	36.6	16.3	15.8	13.0	5.7
	Public secondary school	42.9	39.0	14.0	7.9	7.5	2.9
	Community college	28.6	22.0	41.9	36.4	41.8	71.4
Could you explain why you decided to leave school?	Dislike of school	42.9	17.1	21.7	15.8	9.6	8.6
	Class(es)	0	0	5.4	10.9	4.1	14.3
	Ease	0	4.9	.8	1.2	0	8.6
	Irrelevance to personal needs/ desires	0	2.4	5.4	8.5	5.5	20.0
	Credits	0	9.8	7.0	13.3	19.9	20.0
	Competencies	0	0	.8	0	.7	0
	Other academic reasons	0	0	2.3	1.8	1.4	11.4

Question	Response Category	% 14	% 15	% 16	% 17	% 18	% 19
	Class(es) non-attendance	0	19.5	7.0	5.5	9.6	2.9
	Other disciplinary action	28.6	14.6	7.8	4.2	4.1	2.9
	Poor decision-making	14.3	7.3	0	1.8	2.1	2.9
	Other alternative work/ education goals	0	2.4	0	0	0	2.9
	Other reasons	0	12.2	3.9	.6	4.1	2.9
What changes might have helped to keep you in school until graduation?	Changes in interpersonal relations	0	14.6	9.3	6.7	2.1	2.9

Table 6
Responses by Sex

Question	Response Category	% Male	% Female
Could you please tell me what you have been doing since you left school?	Work	74.9	62.4
	Housewife	0	5.7
	Travel	2.2	6.9
And what are you doing right now?	Work	53.8	36.7
	Layoff	3.9	.4
	Housewife	0	6.1
	Nothing	5.7	12.2
	Other	6.5	15.9

Question	Response Category	% Male	% Female
What type of schooling are you thinking about?	Military	7.5	0
Could you explain why you decided to leave school?	Expulsion	5.4	1.6
	Illness	2.5	9.8
	Marriage	0	4.5
	Pregnancy	0	11.4
	Financial Need (Home/Family)	1.1	4.1
	Desire to work	11.5	4.1

Some interesting patterns emerge from an analysis of the preceding data. Patterns for age and class are found at both ends of the spectrum. There is a pattern for the younger leavers and those who left school at the lower grades; there is a quite different pattern for the older leavers and those who left at the upper grades.

The first group consists of those leavers averaging age 15 when interviewed and, for the most part, in the ninth grade when they left school. Their responses indicate they generally gravitate to public secondary schools, high school credit/diploma programs, public alternative schools in higher proportion than does the older age group. However, the response percentages also indicate that the younger the group, the higher the proportion of that group that had been doing "nothing."

When the data on the older respondents is analyzed, the pattern centers around the leavers who left school in the senior year and were 19 when interviewed. As a group, they lean toward vocational schools, apprenticeship programs, Job Corps, work, community colleges, and the military in higher proportion than the younger leavers. In fact, as both age and class increase, the percentage of those who are working steadily increases; and as class increases, so does the proportion of leavers planning to attend a community college. Conversely, the higher the class level at which the respondents left school, the lower the proportion who had been doing "nothing" or who return to public secondary school.

Some motives for leaving school also tend to be clustered around age/class groups. The younger portion of the sample mentioned dislike of school, nonattendance in class, and disciplinary action as reasons for leaving school in greater percentages than did the older leavers. In fact, the younger the age, the higher the proportion stating "other disciplinary action" led to leaving school. In addition, the lower the class, the greater the proportion

of respondents who stated they felt "out of place." The fifteen-year-olds also indicated the highest response rate to the category of "poor decision-making." The ninth graders yielded the lowest percentage of those mentioning "class(es)." On the other hand, higher frequencies for both "class(es)" and "credits" were found at the upper age brackets. In addition, the oldest respondents noted "ease" and "irrelevance" to a higher degree than did the younger leavers.

The patterns of male and female responses seem to reflect stereotypical sex roles. Females had higher response rates for marriage, pregnancy, illness, doing nothing, or attempting to help with family financial problems. By way of contrast, male respondents indicated a higher involvement in the labor force in several ways--"work," "layoff" and "desire to work." In addition, 7.5 percent of the males anticipated enlistment in the military whereas no female named that as a future choice. Also of note, males said "expulsion" was a reason for leaving school in higher proportion than did females. This is also congruent with the male stereotype historically.

F. Comments of Early School Leavers

As previously mentioned, interviewers recorded and then isolated verbatim student comments that could provide significant information beyond that available from strictly quantified response categories. Selected quotes related to the highest response categories in Questions 4 and 5 are presented below without interpretation.

Question 4

Could you explain why you decided to leave school?

Dislike of school in general--

- "Don't learn anything in school--like what do you need to know about the past? We live in the future."
- "To sum up the whole system--not enough education, not enough discipline, social problems, trying to meet everyone's needs."
- "All teenagers go through a stage thinking they don't need school and just want to work. But that's wrong, because we all need school. And I'm glad I came back."

Dislike of specific school--

- "Not very good school--same thing everyday."
- "That's a hard one! Not a good school. Decided to bag it. Learned more in outside world than in school."
- "Lousy school system. If you wasn't an A student, they didn't want you. Tried to go to other school but not in district. Lots were doing it, but I was honest. I could have told them I lived with my grandmother."

Credits--

- "Missed a lot of days close to end of school, so quit. I went back to school at_____. I only need five credits to graduate. I know it was important to get my diploma."

- "Fell behind in credits and didn't want to do that [go back]. Felt out of place. Felt too old for that class.

- "They suspended me for three weeks. Didn't have enough credits. I just never went back."

- "I'll probably take over my dad's business someday and didn't want to take some classes. I was through all twelve grades, but not enough credits to get diploma. I wanted to go into community college and take classes in business, not go back and take classes I didn't need."

- "They never talked to me until my junior year. They told me if I went to community college, I could graduate with my class. But when I went back, they told me different."

- "Lived in Arizona [where 19 credits, rather than 21 are required]. Was taking night classes and three correspondence courses, but board said I couldn't do that, would have to go extra one-half year."

Teacher(s)--

- "I would have stayed in school if just one teacher cared whether or not I stayed."

- "I really liked some classes and some teachers, but some don't really try to teach, don't care about you. Some just there for their job. Not much individual help. Didn't accomplish much."

- "Teachers couldn't control students."

- "I didn't feel the teachers were really teaching. Told you to read, no discussion."

- "Teachers were mean."

- "Teachers treated each student the same--slower ones to keep up with intelligent ones . . . went to night school, which was best, for teachers dealt with each student individually."

- "Teachers really didn't teach. They didn't care."

Boredom, lack of interest--

- "School is boring!"

- "School was not interesting."

- "I already knew what they were teaching; I was bored."

Pregnancy--

- "I would have continued and finished if I hadn't gotten pregnant. I love school."
- "I was p.g. and was going to get married, but didn't."
- "Girls are getting pregnant. Need a nursery. Don't want to leave baby with strangers. Would stay in school if could check on baby during day."

Desire for alternative educational program/institution--

- "Gave up and wanted GED, thought it was same as diploma."
- "Decided, Hey, I only got two years and I have invested this much time so I will finish with class [doing high school credit program at community college] instead of mailed diploma."
- "Wanted to be given the responsibility and treated as an adult. Easier to cope with adults at [community] college. Better environment."

Question 5

What changes might have helped to keep you in school until graduation?

Academics--

- "I would have gone to classes I registered for [but couldn't get desired classes]; therefore, I never would have been suspended."
- "If classes were a little more interesting . . . atmosphere terrible. total jock school--a lot of people feel this way too! They hardly had to work to get A's. I'll never go back to a high school again."
- "Cut required classes and give more choices."
- "Offer more classes and more relaxed schedule. Was holding 4 point in college while high school grades were going down."
- "Straight A's--needed to provide me with more to do."

School Personnel--

- "Counselor wasn't helping with problems--with teachers and classes and personal problems."
- "Counselors did everything they could."
- "If they would teach about how to live now and not so much about the past."
- "If school was different--if teacher-student relationship was different."

- "Personally, I think a more open sense, with kids involved. Be more thoughtful, helpful."
- "If teachers acted like they cared and didn't rush through everything."
- "We tried. We appealed to the principal, but he said I had missed too much time to be enrolled."
- "_____ High too crowded to help individual kids. Kids are just part of a crowd, and no one will miss them being gone."

Self--

- "Everyone really tried to help me stay in school. It was just me."
- "Smart ass--learned not to be. Doesn't make you any friends."

The preceding sample of student comments reflects the degree of openness and specificity leavers brought to their interviews. The responses to Question 6 also indicated that the sample members were almost unanimously willing to be interviewed again, to discuss the early school leaver problem further with researchers. Specifically when asked, "Would it be okay if we asked you some similar questions in the future?" leavers responded as follows:

Yes	95.6 percent
No	1.9 percent
Unsure	2.5 percent

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

All of the following recommendations for research of Oregon early school leavers in the future assume the most basic recommendation--more comprehensive studies over time:

1. Develop a precise definition, one that would include young people not readily identifiable by the schools (e.g., teenagers who, unknown to the local district, move into a school community; those known to social agencies or the court system but not to the educational institutions).

2. Gather data from relevant groups not reached by this exploratory study (e.g., 1980 sample members never contacted; future leavers, including those below grade nine; teachers, counselors, school administrators; parents of leavers).

3. Follow-up on this study's respondents, with particular emphasis on the degree to which their future activities are congruent with their stated plans.

4. Use more restrictive sampling specifications so that respondents can be compared on the basis of additional variables such as socioeconomic status of community, ethnicity, school size.

5. Explore the relationship of the following factors to the early school leaver problem:

   - self-concept
   - scholastic ability
   - achievement in basic skills
   - grades
   - attendance
   - disciplinary record
   - involvement with co-curricular activities
   - peer and family attitudes toward education
   - family structure/socioeconomic status
   - drugs/alcohol
   - delinquency/crime
   - knowledge of alternative programs
   - months in which students leave most frequently
   - nature of employment of working leavers
   - economic, political, social trends

APPENDIX

STATEWIDE NET ENROLLMENT DATA--A MEASURE OF HOLDING POWER

The following table was compiled using attendance records maintained by the Oregon Department of Education. Enrollments are shown by grade level for the last 28 graduating classes (1952-1980) for public secondary schools. Figures do not include transfers within the state. Transfers into the state are included on the assumption that these figures balance with figures for transfers out of state. Percentage figures in parentheses indicate the cumulative survival rate from the ninth grade.

Class	Ninth	% Not Returned	Tenth	% Not Returned	Eleventh	% Not Returned	Twelfth	% Not Returned	Graduates
1952	18,918 (100.0%)	7.7	17,457 (92.3%)	10.1	15,687 (82.9%)	15.0	13,331 (70.5%)	9.4	12,072 (63.8%)
1953	18,971 (100.0%)	6.0	17,834 (94.0%)	10.9	15,894 (83.8%)	14.1	13,659 (72.0%)	8.3	12,526 (66.0%)
1954	19,994 (100.0%)	6.8	18,627 (93.2%)	11.1	16,559 (82.8%)	11.8	14,603 (73.0%)	9.2	13,264 (66.3%)
1955	20,918 (100.0%)	7.6	19,326 (92.4%)	8.8	17,634 (84.3%)	11.7	15,578 (74.5%)	8.7	14,223 (68.0%)
1956	21,932 (100.0%)	5.0	20,846 (95.0%)	8.8	19,016 (86.7%)	11.8	16,776 (76.5%)	9.1	15,256 (69.6%)
1957	22,686 (100.0%)	4.9	21,569 (95.1%)	8.1	19,826 (87.4%)	12.4	17,372 (76.6%)	8.7	15,853 (69.9%)
1958	23,226 (100.0%)	4.1	22,278 (95.9%)	7.6	20,577 (88.6%)	10.8	18,358 (79.0%)	9.3	16,645 (71.7%)
1959	23,923 (100.0%)	3.9	22,989 (96.1%)	7.7	21,209 (88.7%)	9.8	19,125 (79.9%)	10.4	17,144 (71.7%)
1960	26,696 (100.0%)	4.0	25,627 (96.0%)	5.9	24,124 (90.4%)	9.9	21,734 (81.4%)	8.9	19,791 (74.1%)
1961	27,969 (100.0%)	3.1	27,104 (96.9%)	5.4	25,637 (91.7%)	8.8	23,379 (83.6%)	9.1	21,261 (76.0%)
1962	26,762 (100.0%)	2.5	26,089 (97.5%)	5.4	24,668 (92.2%)	8.1	22,680 (84.7%)	8.4	20,750 (77.5%)
1963	26,603 (100.0%)	2.1	26,037 (97.9%)	4.6	24,847 (93.4%)	7.3	23,031 (86.6%)	9.7	20,800 (78.2%)
1964	30,264 (100.0%)	1.9	29,701 (98.1%)	3.4	28,692 (94.8%)	5.6	27,074 (89.5%)	9.6	24,463 (80.8%)
1965	36,322 (100.0%)	.6	36,098 (99.4%)	2.3	35,275 (97.1%)	6.8	32,864 (90.5%)	8.8	29,988 (82.6%)
1966	35,074 (100.0%)	0	35,063 (100.0%)	3.6	33,815 (96.4%)	6.5	31,623 (90.2%)	10.2	28,398 (81.0%)
1967	35,493 (100.0%)	.9	35,180 (99.1%)	3.0	34,141 (96.2%)	5.8	32,170 (90.6%)	9.5	29,111 (82.6%)
1968	35,656 (100.0%)	0	35,787 (100.0%)	3.1	34,691 (97.3%)	6.8	32,326 (90.7%)	8.9	29,464 (82.6%)
1969	37,452 (100.0%)	.9	37,125 (99.1%)	3.0	36,029 (96.2%)	6.9	33,352 (89.5%)	8.9	30,537 (81.5%)
1970	39,694 (100.0%)	.8	39,362 (99.2%)	2.8	38,270 (96.4%)	6.7	35,698 (89.9%)	9.7	32,236 (81.2%)
1971	40,137 (100.0%)	0	40,533 (100.0%)	2.6	39,490 (98.4%)	8.4	36,162 (90.1%)	9.4	32,757 (81.6%)
1972	40,323 (100.0%)	0	40,617 (100.0%)	4.2	38,907 (96.5%)	8.7	35,513 (88.1%)	10.2	31,882 (79.1%)
1973	41,289 (100.0%)	.2	41,192 (99.8%)	4.6	39,278 (95.1%)	11.1	34,929 (84.6%)	10.6	31,221 (75.6%)
1974	41,995 (100.0%)	.3	41,859 (99.7%)	6.3	39,209 (93.4%)	11.8	34,590 (82.4%)	10.9	30,806 (73.4%)
1975	42,559 (100.0%)	.5	42,362 (99.5%)	6.9	39,441 (92.7%)	12.0	34,695 (81.5%)	11.6	30,668 (72.1%)
1976	42,474 (100.0%)	1.5	41,816 (98.4%)	7.4	38,703 (91.1%)	11.3	34,346 (80.8%)	11.0	30,561 (71.9%)
1977	42,600 (100.0%)	1.8	41,837 (98.2%)	6.9	38,981 (91.4%)	10.6	34,808 (80.6%)	13.1	30,258 (71.0%)
1978	43,694 (100.0%)	1.9	42,858 (98.1%)	7.2	39,781 (91.1%)	12.1	34,984 (80.1%)	14.3	29,998 (68.7%)
1979	44,115 (100.0%)	.6	43,831 (99.4%)	7.8	40,392 (91.6%)	12.5	35,332 (80.1%)	14.4	30,228 (68.5%)
1980	44,083 (100.0%)	1.0	43,643 (99.8%)	8.7	39,827 (90.3%)	11.9	35,102 (79.6%)	14.7	29,939 (67.9%)

The above figures show that 67.9% of the ninth graders enrolled in 1976 graduated in 1980, as compared with 63.8% for the class of 1952. Percentages for graduates (final column) do not include figures for those receiving attendance certificates, or for those who attended the full final year but did not meet requirements for graduation. Some of those not graduating will be reflected in succeeding years' totals as these individuals complete graduation requirements. Graduate figures do not include figures for students graduating early, or those enrolled in community college programs.

PARTICIPATING DISTRICTS AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Astoria 1C
- Astoria Senior High School

Beaverton 48J
- Aloha High School
- Highland Park Intermediate School
- Sunset High School

Brookings-Harbor 17C
- Brookings-Harbor High School

Canby Union High School District 1
- Canby Union High School

Central District 13J
- Central High School

Central Point District 6
- Crater High School
- Scenic Junior High School

Corvallis District 509J
- Corvallis Senior High School

David Douglas District 40
- David Douglas High School

Douglas County
- Joseph Lane Junior High School
- Roseburg Senior High School

Eugene District 4J
- James Madison Junior High School
- James Monroe Junior High School
- North Eugene High School

Forest Grove District 15
- Forest Grove High School

Greater Albany District 8J
- North Albany Junior High School

Gresham Union High School District 2J
- Gresham High School

Harrisburg Union High School District 5J
- Harrisburg Union High School

Hermiston District 8
- Hermiston High School

Hillsboro Union High School District 3Jt
- Raymond A. Brown Junior High School
- J. D. Thomas Junior High School

Hood River District
- Cascade Locks High School
- Hood River Junior High School
- Hood River Valley High School

Josephine County Unit
- Hidden Valley High School

Junction City District 69
- Junctin City High School

Klamath Falls Union High School District 2
- Klamath Union High School

La Grande District 1
- La Grande High School

Lake Oswego 7J
- Lake Oswego High School
- Lakeridge High School

Lincoln County District
- Taft High School
- Toledo High School

McMinnville District 40
- McMinnville High School
- McMinnville Junior High School

Medford District 549C
- Medford Senior High School

North Bend District 13
- North Bend Senior High School

North Clackamas District 12
- Clackamas High School

Oregon City District 62
- Moss Junior High School

Portland District 1J
- Benson Polytechnic High School
- Franklin High School
- Madison High School
- Washington-Monroe High School

Redmond 2J
- Redmond High School

Reedsport District 105
Reedsport High School

Reynolds District 7
Reynolds High School

Saint Paul District 45
Saint Paul High School

Salem District 24J
McNary High School
South Salem High School

Sherwood District 88J
Sherwood High School

South Lane District 45J3
Cottage Grove High School

Springfield District 19
Thurston High School

Sweet Home District 55
Sweet Home High School

School Leavers Telephone
Interview Schedule

School Leaver Code _____

Telephone Number Where Reached _____

Interviewer's Name _____ Interview Date _____

Student's Sex Male Female

Student's Present Age 13 14 15 16 17 18 19

Student's Class (when left school) 9 10 11 12

(1) Question: Could you please tell me what you have been doing since you left school?

Coding Possibilities:

1. ☐ High School credit/diploma program
2. ☐ GED program
3. ☐ Evening public secondary school
4. ☐ Public alternative school
5. ☐ Private or parochial secondary school
6. ☐ Correspondence courses
7. ☐ Job Corps
8. ☐ Vocational school
9. ☐ Apprenticeship program
10. ☐ Community college
11. ☐ College/university
12. ☐ Military
13. ☐ National Guard
14. ☐ Work
15. ☐ Lay-off
16. ☐ Job seeking
17. ☐ Housewife
18. ☐ Travel
19. ☐ Institutional care
20. ☐ Nothing
21. ☐ Other _____

(2) Question: And what are you doing right now?

Coding Possibilities:

1. ☐ High School credit/diploma program
2. ☐ GED program
3. ☐ Public secondary school
4. ☐ Evening public secondary school
5. ☐ Public alternative school
6. ☐ Private or parochial secondary school
7. ☐ Correspondence courses
8. ☐ Job Corps
9. ☐ Vocational school
10. ☐ Apprenticeship program
11. ☐ Community college
12. ☐ College/university

13. [] Military
14. [] National Guard
15. [] Work
16. [] Lay-off
17. [] Job seeking
18. [] Housewife
19. [] Travel
20. [] Institutional care
21. [] Nothing
22. [] Other _____

(3) Question: Do you have plans to continue your education in the future?

Coding Possibilities:

[] Yes [] No [] Unsure

(If answer is yes or unsure) what type of schooling are you thinking about?

Coding Possibilities:

1. [] High school credit/diploma program
2. [] GED program
3. [] Public secondary schcol
4. [] Evening public secondary school
5. [] Public alternative school
6. [] Private or parochial secondary school
7. [] Correspondence courses
8. [] Job Corps
9. [] Vocational School
10. [] Apprenticeship program
11. [] Community college
12. [] College/university
13. [] Military
14. [] Other _____
15. [] Unsure

(4) Question: Could you explain why you decided to leave school?

Coding Possibilities:

1. [] Unsure
2. [] Dislike of school
3. [] Dislike of specific school

Academics

4. [] Class(es) in general
5. [] Ease
6. [] Irrelevance to personal needs/desires
7. [] Difficulty
8. [] Incomplete classwork
9. [] Failing grades
10. [] Lack of accomplishment
11. [] Low level of learning

12. ☐ Schedule
13. ☐ Basic skills

Conduct Standards

17. ☐ School non-attendance
18. ☐ Class(es) non-attendance
19. ☐ Rules

Interpersonal Relations

24. ☐ Emphasis on social relations in school
25. ☐ Emphasis on social relations by students
26. ☐ Clique

School Personnel

30. ☐ Teacher(s)
31. ☐ Counselor(s)
32. ☐ Administrator(s)

Self

36. ☐ General attitude to school
37. ☐ Boredom, lack of interest
38. ☐ Lack of motivation
39. ☐ Emotional/mental state

Home/Family Concerns

44. ☐ Lack of parent/guardian support to stay in school
45. ☐ Marriage

Alternative Work/Education Goals

49. ☐ Work offer
50. ☐ Desire to work
51. ☐ Desire for alternative learning mode

54. ☐ Other _____

14. ☐ Credits
15. ☐ Competencies
16. ☐ Other _____

20. ☐ Parent/child environment
21. ☐ Expulsion
22. ☐ Other disciplinary action
23. ☐ Other _____

27. ☐ Feeling of being out of place
28. ☐ Hassles
29. ☐ Other _____

33. ☐ Advice to leave school
34. ☐ Lack of encouragement to stay in school
35. ☐ Other _____

40. ☐ Physical illness
41. ☐ Financial need
42. ☐ Poor decision-making
43. ☐ Other _____

46. ☐ Pregnancy
47. ☐ Financial need
48 ☐ Other _____

52. ☐ Desire for alternative educational program/institution
53. ☐ Other _____

(5) Question: Do you think anything could have been done to help keep you in school?

Coding Possibilities:

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

(If answer is yes or unsure) what changes might have helped to keep you in school until graduation?

Coding Possibilities:

1. ☐ School in general
2. ☐ Specified school
3. ☐ Academics
4. ☐ Conduct/conduct standards
5. ☐ Interpersonal relations
6. ☐ School personnel
7. ☐ Self
8. ☐ Home/family
9. ☐ Nothing
10. ☐ Other _____
11. ☐ Unsure

(6) Question: Would it be okay if we asked you some similar questions in the future?

Coding Possibilities:

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

(7) Question: It is entirely up to you whether you respond or not, but would you be willing to tell me your ethnic origin? (If answer is yes) I will read a list of categories to you and you can tell me what would be the appropriate category for you.

1. ☐ White
2. ☐ Black
3. ☐ Hispanic
4. ☐ Russian speaking
5. ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander
6. ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native
7. ☐ Other _____
8. ☐ Information witheld

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___ Completely
___ More than half
___ Less than half
___ Just skimmed

Does this publication fulfill its purpose as stated in the preface or introduction?

___ Completely
___ Partly
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___ Often
___ Sometimes
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___ Never

Which section is most valuable? _____
_____

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___ Consultant to classroom teachers
___ School administrator
___ Other _____

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___ Yes, with reservations
___ No
___ Other _____

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___ In general, yes
___ In general, no
___ Always no
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_____
_____
_____

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